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A

SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE

General Fast,

MARCH 7, MDCCXCVIII.

BY W. COLE, D.D.

CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH,
PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND
RECTOR OF MERSHAM, KENT.

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MDCCXCVIII.



TO
JACOB BRYANT, Esq.

THE MOST LEARNED AND ZEALOUS CHAMPION
OF THE TRUTH OF THE

MOSAIC AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS;

THIS SERMON IS INSCRIBED,

AS A TESTIMONY OF GRATEFUL AFFECTION, ESTEEM,
AND VENERATION,

BY HIS MOST OBLIGED, AND

FAITHFUL HUMBLE SERVANT,

W. COLE.



A

S E R M O N.

PSALM XXII. 4.

OUR FATHERS HOPED IN THEE; THEY TRUSTED
IN THEE, AND THOU DIDST DELIVER THEM.

THE Jewish theocratical polity was upheld and administered by the visible interposition of Jehovah, the God of Israel. *I am* appeared to Moses at the burning bush; and at various times, both antecedent and subsequent to the deliverance of the Israëlites from Egypt. God conducted them safe through the Red Sea; through the vast and howling wilderness; the light of the divine presence went before them; the law was ushered amidst thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes. Both his mercies and judgments were apparent; at his command the rock
9 issued

issued forth streams of water, and manna from heaven supplied their wants.

This is indeed so obvious, throughout the Mosaic dispensation, that it would be superfluous to dwell on particular instances; but even this highly favoured nation were a *rebellious and stiff-necked people, a faithless and stubborn generation*. What then shall we say, what shall we expect from the rest of mankind, remote from the Shechinah, the Tabernacle, and the Temple? Shall we say that Christianity has purified their affections, and that their hearts are now impressed, and their consciences spiritualized by the evangelical Urim and Thummim? This was undoubtedly the case of the primitive Christians. But, alas! corruptions have gradually tainted the heart, and disfigured the glory of the Christian Church. Mankind, deeply occupied in worldly pursuits, immersed in sensuality, elevated by conceit, arrogance, and presumption, trust not now in God, as their christian fore-fathers did; but *have started aside like a broken bow*.

We live in an age of such pride of heart and self-sufficient *philosophy*, that, collected, as it were, within ourselves, we are too apt to *think scorn* of the situations

tions and attainments of others, and to entrench ourselves in the magnificent idea of our own independence. This seems the trait and characteristic, as it were, of the present generation. We but seldom find that tractability and lowliness of mind, which teaches a becoming respect towards superiors, which inculcates a reverence for magistrates, obedience to the laws, and an habitual trust in Almighty God. Every thing heretofore esteemed venerable, lovely, and of good report, is trampled in the dust. The age has drank deep of the gall of bitterness, and dregs of pollution; the kingdom *of the old and crooked serpent* has erected itself in the hearts and minds of deluded mortals, and threatens the world with the wide sweep of destruction. Pride was the occasion of the first apostacy from God, the fall of Satan and the Angels of darkness. From the grand primeval tempter the same poison is transfused into man.

Whereas, if mankind would form a due estimate of themselves, modesty and humility would appear more becoming their present dependent state; and, instead of pride and vanity and frivolous gaiety, the sackcloth of self-abasement would more frequently denote inward humiliation and contrition of spirit. A religious confidence in God through Christ is the
only

only rock on which man can build ; other hope he has none. This is indeed sufficient to shield him against adversity, to conduct him safe through fiery trials : but without this anchor of Religion, man is a creature most helpless and forlorn. Consider his situation here, his infancy, youth, manhood, and old age ;—and then talk of pride, and self-dependence ! What can an individual and solitary mortal do, without the assistance of others ? And if we pursue the reflection to it's fountain-head, what can he do without God ? Children look up to their parents, the distressed to their friends, the poor to the rich, the weak to the strong : and all who are wise, to God. Here is the foundation of all religion, without which individuals and states must fall. In the hour of distress we implore the mercies and protection of our heavenly Father ; in all instances of dereliction and destitution, the perplexed and pensive soul flees for refuge to the well-spring of life and consolation ; of which resource to be bereaved, is the consummation of misery and despair. As a religious man, though deserted by earthly comforters, finds supernatural and divine support, from the mercies of God, through faith in Christ Jesus ; so a religious and Christian nation, when threatened with impending danger, with devout prostration of heart pours out prayers and supplications before the throne of Grace,

confesses

confesses the sins of the people, sheds tears of repentance, with deep sorrow and public general fasting. * “ *Who can tell whether God will turn away his fierce anger, that we perish not?*” This was the reflection of the Ninevites. “ *I stand at the door and knock,*” says Christ, in the Revelations; *nor doth he only knock without, but also within assist to open, whereby access and entrance is given to the heavenly presence of that saving power, which maketh man a repaired temple for God’s good Spirit again to inhabit* †.

Health, safety, riches and plenty produce in the unwise and incautious, a wantonness, extravagance, and giddiness of mind, which carry a man, as it were, beyond himself; he becomes, in a manner, drunken with prosperity; then he is off his guard; and the opportunity of attack is watched and eagerly seized by the infernal enemy, who is every where roaming about, *seeking whom he may devour*. Reason as well as religion being forsaken, conscience is for a time lulled asleep, God and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, death, the grave, the resurrection, the general judgment, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell, are all forgotten. Luxurious indulgence, riot and dissipation break in upon the mind, which is now borne down

* Jon. iii. 9.

† Hooker’s Eccl. P. V. 3. p. 7.

by a torrent of sin and wickedness; but when the poor intoxicated profligate is unexpectedly visited by sickness, danger, or overwhelming distress and affliction, then, if not utterly lost and abandoned to a reprobate mind, he naturally begins to recover his recollection, to rally his dispersed thoughts, and is brought back to sobriety of reason, and, by the grace of God, to a sense of religion. He seeks God in prayer, he implores forgiveness, he turns to heaven, through Christ, in weeping, fasting, and praying. *It is good for him that he has been in trouble; for before, he went wrong;—but now he repents, he feels a recovery of his soul from deadly sickness, a restitution of glorious light to his darkened mind, a comfortable reconciliation with God, a spiritual nativity, a rising from the dead, a day-spring from the depth of obscurity, a full restoration of the seat of grace, and throne of glory, a triumph over sin, and a saving victory through Christ* *. Thus it is with a nation. Thus may it be with our nation! And may these be the blessed effects of this day's solemnity!

As an uncorrupted Senator, impressed with the dignity of his station, in order to excite the people to the most strenuous and patriotic exertions of loyalty,

* Eccles. Pol. V. 3. p. 61.

alternately

alternately works upon their hopes and fears; at one time holding out to them the enemy's weakness, arising from the badness of their cause, and the destructive tendency of their designs, which, being subversive of every human comfort, and religious hope, cannot possibly be of very long prosperous duration; at another time spreading the alarm, by painting in strong rhetorical colours, the power, duplicity, artifice, and indefatigable perseverance of the Jacobinical Directory, and their unconquerable malice and rooted hatred to this country; so we, as the appointed Ministers of Christ's Gospel, considering the inseparable union which subsists between the Christian Church of England, and the Constitution of the land, and that the preservation of the one is bound up with that of the other, think it our duty, particularly in times of distress and menacing aspect, to co-operate with our civil rulers, in preserving the Christian and political vessel, committed to our several charges, from approaching ruin and desolation. In the present seasons of appointed Fastings and Thanksgivings, besides the ordinary topics, which the religious solemnity of the occasion may require, we deem it requisite to exhort the congregation to assist with their prayers to God through Christ, and also with our own prayers and energies of mind, body and estate, to further the

exertions of the nation against the insulting, blaspheming, Anti-christian Foe ; we consider it as a duty, incumbent on the Ministry, to represent the threatened danger ; to point out the resources of hope ; that we may not dread too much, or too much despise the insolence of the enemy and the avenger. There are proper seasons, and reasonable motives for encouragement as well as for alarm.

Consider we then *the signs of the times*. Our Saviour pointed out to the Jews *the signs of the times*, which were to be the forerunners of the invasion of Judea by the Romans, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the great Temple ; but the hearts of that infatuated people were hardened, like the heart of the Egyptian Pharaoh ; the notion of the full restoration of their kingdom by the advent of their expected Messiah, had so engrossed their attention, being so congenial also to their pride and vanity, that the generality of them could not reconcile themselves to the idea of a spiritual kingdom, which was to reign in the hearts and affections of men. Even when the Roman Eagle, *the abomination of desolation* stood erected in the holy place, they could hardly be convinced of their erroneous notion.

How

How awful, how tremendous are the signs of our times! *But we will yet put our trust in God*, and will say yet to ourselves, in this heavenly confidence, "*Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?*" The enemy which threatens us, cometh not from a distant country, though providentially separated from us by the waters of the ocean. Their preparations of invasion are instant, zealous, vindictive; we, on the other hand, stand on our defence, resolute, firm, and relying on the patriotic ardour, and intrepidity of our gallant seamen, our ships of war, and our truly loyal army; relying too on the unanimous conjunction of all parties among us; and I hope and trust, chiefly confiding in the *Lord of Hosts, the God of Glory, Majesty, and Victory*. We have been forced into the dreadful conflict, in defence of every thing that can possibly be dear to the heart of man, in defence of our properties, our liberties, our lives, our religion. Our cause is good:—this is a grand point in our favour; but is God on our side? This must be our main support. We are, (and we must confess it) a wicked people! This consideration must occasion the stoutest heart to tremble. And yet, when compared to the apostate blasphemers, we may, I hope, look up to Heaven for mercy. Full many a knee amongst us,
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surely is now bending before the Throne of Grace, and has not bowed to Baal. True religious devotion, reformation of conduct, faith and trust in the Lord of Hosts must be our rock of defence, our anchor in the storm and tempest.

Cromwell's miscreants carried their detestable scheme of confusion into effect, with an affected zeal for religion; even when they were murdering their anointed king, they were, as they blasphemously pretended, "*Seeking the Lord.*" But how have the atheistical enthusiasts acted, with respect to their own fallen monarchy, and with respect to the ruin they are bringing on the surrounding world. They have at once thrown off the mask, and openly, in the broad glare of day, blasphemed their Saviour, renounced their God, trampled under foot the life, the light of Religion, the *blessed Gospel*. All this has been effected, not in a sudden transport of fury, not in a sudden gust of brutish vindictive phrenzy which in a clouded moment of mental alienation, spurns at every consideration offered to sooth and tranquillize outraged reason; but the plot has been contriving, the train has been laid, the machination has been secretly and fearfully proceeding for years and years past, till the bursting earthquake has, with more than volcanic explosion,

explosion, scattered fire, death, and desolation over their own ancient monarchy, over the bordering countries, and is now threatening devastation to the distant still trembling nations.

If we trace this desolating deluge to its fountain-head, we shall find it in the writings of their reprobate anti-christian philosophers, who have sophisticated reason in such a manner, as utterly to have distorted every rule and standard of human action; by which means they have undermined every principle of morality and religion; and by holding out false lights to a giddy unthinking world, have plunged mind, body, and soul, into the most unfathomable depths of darkness, misery, and despair.

What construction can we put on their miserable sentimental jargon of *philanthropy*, their shallow pretence of *general benevolence*, and *universal peace*, and embraces of *fraternization*, and their boasted wide-spreading *Tree of Liberty*? As the stoical Logicians of old were said to *sting themselves with their own pointed subtleties**, so these teachers of impiety and rebellion, have perplexed themselves with the mazes

* Suis se compungunt acuminibus. Cic. de Orat.

of their own contradictory paradoxes. Can *philanthropy* diffuse misery? Can *benevolence* contrive destruction? Can *Peace* sound the tocsin of war and bloodshed? Can *fraternal* love occasion distress, hatred, affliction? Can *liberty* effect the most abject, deplorable, unqualified slavery? Can a corrupted fountain send forth salubrious waters? Can a withered tree bring forth good fruit? Observe, tyrants are pulling down thrones and dignities, despots are proclaiming the *rights of men, liberty* and *equality*. Thus these philosophic projectors, these reasoning conspirators, these speculative, atheistical *enlighteners* of mankind, actuated, as they pretend, by the most heroic and generous affections of unlimited patriotism and universal citizenship, are scattering through the whole world the pestilential blast of terrour, woe, and death!

Nothing can more forcibly demonstrate the permitted influence of diabolical agency in the heart of man, when once it has withdrawn itself from religious principles, than, that persons whose minds have been cultivated by education, enriched by knowledge, informed by historical events, and political experience of ages, should be so perverted, as to turn the fairest fruit and most wholesome nutriment into the most
noxious

noxious and deadly poison. The ferocity of untutored savages excites not our wonder, (though indeed, in some climates, these have proved mild, humane, and generous creatures,) but that men who think themselves worthy of the name of *philosophers*, should with systematic deliberation, with matured and digested scheme, wish to effect mischief, havoc, and complete ruin to particulars and communities, to their own country, to other nations of the world, to the present age, and to all posterity; that they should go about to effect this universal overthrow of law, religion, morality, government, political and social order, not at first by the haughty strides and martial career of a conqueror, (though this was to prove the tragic catastrophe) but by an artful circulation of novels, romances, histories, tracts, and systems of various descriptions, written with such guarded caution, as to elude the penetration of the unwary reader, who sees not the whole drift and tendency of the work; that they should, in their irreligious Encyclopedies, contrive this plan of seduction by every art of allurements, by address, sly insinuation, sneer, ridicule; that they should conceive and project a vast stupendous work of darkness, that could not in all probability be completed for a considerable number of years to come,

when they themselves might be in their * graves, or,
if they should be living, the victims perhaps of their
own

* Voltaire and Frederic did not live to see their plans accomplished.

Barruel. Transl. V. I. p. 113.

It may be of public utility to subjoin Barruel's account of the death of Voltaire, the circumstances of which I shall compress into a narrow compass.—“Rage, remorse, and blasphemy, all accompany and characterize the long agony of the dying Atheist. This death, the most terrible that is ever recorded to have struck the impious man, will not be denied by his companions of impiety; their silence, however much they may wish to deny it, is the least of those corroborative proofs which could be adduced.—He calls for the priests, who ministered to *Him* whom he had sworn to *crush*, under the appellation of *the wretch*.—The conspirators had strained every nerve to hinder the chief from consummating his recantation, and every avenue was shut to the priest, which Voltaire himself had sent for. The demons haunted every access; rage succeeds to fury, and fury to rage again, during the remainder of his life. Then it was that D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others of the conspirators, who had beset his apartment, never approached him, but to witness their own ignominy, and often he would curse them, and exclaim, “Retire, it is you that have brought me to my present state; begone, I could have done without you all, but you could not exist without me; and what a wretched glory have you procured me!” Then would succeed the horrid remembrance of his conspiracy; they could hear him, the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God, whom he had conspired against, and in plaintive accents would he cry out, Oh Christ! Oh Jesus Christ! And then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. The hand which had traced in ancient writ the sentence of
an

own infernal conspiracy;—that *philosophers*, I say, should, with such unceasing industry, and persevering diligence, lay waste the whole moral, political, and natural world, is a paradox that cannot be solved, or accounted for, but by referring it to the permissive providence, and awful judgments of the Supreme Being, who seeing mankind utterly enslaved to the service of sin, and the kingdom of Satan, has delivered them up to a reprobate mind: and by the instrumentality of *philosophic, affiliated, and fraternizing conspirators*, wreaks his vengeance on the *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* of the present day, that by an extermination of universal corruption, he may prepare the way for the reign of his elect, and the renovation of his spiritual and evangelical kingdom.

What is it which these blaspheming, jacobinical, *illuminated* Societies have not plotted? What Jews,

an impious reviling king, seemed to trace before his eyes, *Crush then, do crush the wretch*. In vain he turned his head away; the time was coming apace when he was to appear before the tribunal of him he had blasphemed, and his physicians, particularly Mr. Tronchin, thunder-struck retire, declaring the death of the impious man to be terrible indeed."——The Mareschal de Richelieu flies from the bed-side, declaring it to be a fight too terrible to be sustained, and Mr. Tronchin, that the furies of Orestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire. P. 344, &c.

Turks, Infidels, or Heretics, what apostate from God, what Julian, Celsus, or Porphyry, or even Judas himself, has shewn such unqualified malice against the Christian Cross, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, as this *Pandæmonium* of philosophers?

Woe unto you, ye generation of vipers! How are the beautified orders, ranks, and gradations of society overthrown? How are the hopes and consolations of Religion fled? How are the moral restraints and decencies of civil life dissolved? What confidence subsists between man and man? What alleviation in the ties of friendship? What balm is left in conjugal fidelity and endearment? The morals, minds, and hearts of the very female sex are infected, poisoned, outraged! Schools and seminaries of Atheism and Infidelity are instituted; and a system of education upheld, and thus transmitted to future generations for the promotion of irreligion, anarchy, and wild uproar!

The colouring of this odious picture is still heightened when we reflect, that not only in individuals, and in private life, all sense of decency, piety, and goodness is by this means extinguished, but in the broad view of *national* character, every feature of *public Faith*, *political Honour*, *Law*, and *Justice* is completely erased,
and

and blotted out. The father of lyes is the mover, instigator, director. *Ungodly men are rulers over them, and Satan standeth at their right hand**.

We have flattered ourselves with *peace*, so eagerly desired and so desirable, if it could with safety be obtained: but what peace, what alliance, what connexion can be expected, or maintained, where the government of the country is upheld by lies, supported by baseness, characterized by cruelty, pride, insolence, hollow sophism, deceit, and perfidy? Surely they are, what *Totilas* styled himself, *the scourge of God*†! O! may the days of their mis-rule be few‡, and may another take their office!

Amidst these afflicting scenes, how soothing would it be to the mind, if it might be indulged with a contemplative dream, as it were, of solemn and religious hope! Amidst the convulsion of states, and wreck of empires, and infidel scorn of Christ, and his cross, and his gospel, if Britain could be preserved by the mercy of Almighty God, as the favoured shelter, refuge, and haven, for his persecuted and afflicted church! With that light of celestial revela-

* Ps. cix. v. 5. † Flagellum Dei. ‡ Ps. cix. v. 7.

tion which to Adam opened the dawning prospect of reconciliation, grace, and mercy, the glorious church of God first beamed on the world; from thence transmitted gradually to the Patriarchs, preserved during the Egyptian bondage, conducted by Moses through the wilderness, and there first enthroned in the tabernacle, and enshrined afterwards in the magnificent temple, opening with gradual and progressive splendour from the first to the second Adam, even in its figurative and typical state was arrayed in the beauty of holiness, and awful display of its Levitical and pontifical glory. This heavenly church, receiving in its appointed time, its spiritual perfection from Christ himself, *without spot or wrinkle*; has been, through the protection of God's providence, and the supernatural grace and power of the Holy Spirit, the completion of prophecies, display of miracles, and the ministration of the apostles, bishops, and pastors of the Christian flock, conducted through various persecutions to the time of the *Great Constantine*, from whose age downwards, *Kings became its nursing fathers, and Queens its nursing mothers*. *Built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the head-corner-stone*, it was in early days transferred to this favoured land; and though here it has been incrufted formerly with the idolatrous delusions of Papal superstition,

superstition, it has for a long series of years, by the blessing of God, been purified from foreign corruptions, and emancipated from Romish Jurisdiction. This church, separated, reformed, and distinguished, as it is, by the title of *the Church of England*, has flourished gloriously for a length of time: O! may it still flourish, amidst this over-spreading inundation of wickedness, blasphemy, and atheism! May this island, like the sanctified ark of Noah, preserve the hallowed deposit of godly devotion and christian grace; transmitting un sullied the true society of saints from their militant to their triumphant and beatific state! May it be the asylum and sanctuary of persecuted innocence, and of the afflicted candidates for the heavenly Jerusalem! May this signal honour be reserved for the high legislative power of this country, with our beloved, illustrious, and most exemplary Sovereign at its head,—That Sovereign, who, like David of old time, *feedeth his people with a faithful and true heart, and ruleth them prudently with all his power. Psalm LXXVIII. v. 73.* May the triple-headed, anti-christian, anti-monarchical, anti-social monster, however elsewhere idolized, here at least, fall like *the Philistine Dagon*, before the ark of the Lord! May we say with the Psalmist, “ *This shall*
be

*be God's rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have a
delight therein."* Psalm CXXXII. v. 15.

*"Thou, O Lord, hast brought a vine out of
Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up, and the
wild beasts of the field devour it.—Turn thee again,
thou God of Hosts: behold and visit this vine."
Psalm LXXX. v. 8, 13, 14.*

FINIS.

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